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**Between modernization of society
and modernization of education
The Polish Higher Education Case**

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Abstract

The paper will present three main theses. They will be supported with an analysis of documents related to the shaping of the policies of social and economic development, and higher education development in Poland.

- 1) Thesis: imitational character of modernization processes in relation to the modernization of Polish society.

The specific character of the Polish modernization process is described in the categories of imitational modernization, where emphasis is placed on the necessity of Poland's adaptation to a certain democratic and market economy model. These processes got stronger together with Poland's accession to the EU, when the state intensified its activities to foster policies of social and economic development. Pursuing the goals of the Lisbon Strategy (to build a knowledge-based economy and society) was of particular importance as it was perceived as a chance to catch up with the civilization development.

- 2) Thesis: decision makers' failure to perceive or understand the function of higher education in view of society's modernisation needs.

During the state transformation period the Polish decision makers forgot the fact that modernization of economy cannot happen without a concurrent social modernization, and the directions for the changes were paved only with general market economy and democracy slogans. The potential of schools of higher education was neglected for two decades. There is numerous data indicating poor "modernisation" of the education and research systems and therefore it is difficult to say that the decision makers treated higher education as a key factor determining the level of modernization potential of society. Reformatory measures of the Polish government in the area of higher education have intensified only within the last several years and the paper will analyse them in detail.

- 3) Thesis: ideological character of modernization of higher education.

Higher education reforms are connected with pursuing the goals of the Bologna Process. The ideological character of the reforms carried out in Poland is manifested in the fact that both the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy are perceived as political projects. Strategic documents generated by the government constitute a makeshift and politically orchestrated reply to the recommendations made by the EU. Polish decision makers have never placed higher education within their genuine political priorities before. The paper will show how this situation has recently changed.

AGNIESZKA DZIEDZICZAK-FOLTYN

**BETWEEN MODERNIZATION OF SOCIETY AND
MODERNIZATION OF EDUCATION
THE POLISH HIGHER EDUCATION CASE**

*We thought about everything through the prism of the hope to implement Western standards.
It was an imitational choice.*
Paweł Śpiewak, 2004¹

Conference paper: CHER Conference “Effects of Higher Education Reforms” (University of Oslo, 2010)

Introduction

For the last two decades Poland has witnessed significant political, social and economic changes that had, however, little modernization impact. Facing global challenges, Poland is still looking for its own model of development and is still to make its key strategic decisions. Taking this global-cum-temporary perspective as a background, the role of higher education in the modernization processes is worth considering.

In this context, Polish modernization efforts should be depicted in two dimensions: theoretical and empirical. The starting point of this analysis is the multidimensional interpretation of the broad and flexible meaning of "modernization". The public discourse associates "modernization" both with "infrastructure" (as its modification, e.g. upgrading information systems), and "superstructure" (as pursuit of certain social and political ideals, e.g. development of a modern state). Similar distinctions can be found in the scientific discourse. Theoretical discussions concentrate on what is called "studies on the system transformation". In the Polish discourse, these changes are interpreted in the category of modernization, with two aspects being distinguished here: the organizational and institutional aspect (the state) and the mental and cultural aspect (people). In the case of Poland, the main "modernization drivers" were the governments and political elites that consciously

¹ Interview with Paweł Śpiewak entitled *On the transformation brought to a standstill reflected in the magic mirror of Polish sociology* (C. Michalski) published in "Europa" No. 29/2004 and:
http://dziennik.pl/dziennik/europa/article47482/O_zatrzymanej_transformacji_w_magicznym_zwierciadle_polskiej_socjologii.html (1.05.2010)

constructed certain modernization strategies. These strategies were to introduce Poland to Europe, so they often relied on a simple imitation of the West. The Polish modernization effort in the pursuit of Europe and the modern world may also be illustrated in the empirical dimension. Modernization ideas and initiatives have been reflected in strategic documents drawn up by the state authorities. They depict the Polish government's painstakingly created vision of the social and economic development of Poland, including a vision of the development of higher education.

And here a question arises: is Poland capable of developing its own model of the development of higher education and resist the allure of imitation (if there is a reason to resist it)? To answer this question, the following conditions and circumstances must be taken into account:

- 1) The imitational character of the modernization and transformation processes in relation to social and economic modernization of the country.
- 2) Delayed thinking about the future; development policies in their infancy.
- 3) Ideological character of the modernization of higher education.

Modernization as a way of societies and their systems to modernity

The term "modernization" appears in many diverse and evolving concepts. Furthermore, modernization processes are interpreted differently in economics, sociology, political science, and in a much different way in psychology (Szczepański 1989: 34-37). Economic theories of modernization refer to two models of change: the first treats change as economic growth connected with evolution of the social system, the other – as a series of subsequent stages. Sociological theories refer to the impact of extra-individual and extra-economic factors (including axiological and cultural systems) on economic development. Political science promotes theories that link the intensity of modernization changes with social and political movements and activeness. Psychological theories of modernization, on the other hand, concentrate mainly on the attempts to identify personal and personality aspects of development (most often recognized as economic development) and signify features of "modern personality" that foster growth and development.

In social science, there are three ways to understand the term "modernization", with different levels of specificity. In the most general meaning, modernization means a gradual change of society, a movement along a definite line of progress. Another meaning emphasises reaching modernity understood as a set of social, political, economic, cultural and mental changes

taking place in the West since 16th century and now reaching their climax. The third and most precise meaning refers to the movement from the outskirts to the centre of modern society. In accordance with the definition of modernization proposed by Reinhard Bendix (1968: 37), it should be assumed that what is meant here is the progress of a leading society and subsequent changes in an "imitating" country. Economic, political, social and cultural domination of Western Europe, North America and Japan is emphasized here. But what is more important, economic expansion of a dominating centre does not leave peripheral countries any choice but to replicate the characteristic features of the centre. In accordance with this assumption, the degree of development is depicted by the factors that characterise the current position of the global leaders, while the distance from this position shows the extent of retardation (Mokrzycki 1999: 79-80). This most narrow understanding of modernization is represented in modernization and neomodernization theories, as well as convergence theories (Sztompka 2005: 130). In a classical view, modernization theories concerned the contrast between the First and the Third World. Beginning from 1990's, convergence theories – that also explain the phenomenon of post-communist transformation – have concentrated on the division into the First and the Second World. Due to the complex character of the matter, this paper does not include a discussion on a revised notion of modernity or modernization theory. But it should be stressed that modernization is still an existing challenge for post-communist societies.

The analysis presented in the paper requires that reference is made to two ways of understanding the notion of modernization. Firstly, in relation to social and economic modernization of the country, modernization is treated as an intended, purposeful and planned process of in which a country with a backward civilization nears an established model of modernity (Sztompka 2002: 508). The specific character of the "Polish-style" modernization is illustrated by a particular type of transformation (imitational modernization) which accentuates the necessity of Poland adapting to a defined model of democracy and market economy (Ziółkowski 1999; Szacki 1999; Krasnodębski 2006; Kolasa-Nowak 2009). Secondly, modernization also concerns all changes that help upgrade individual forms of organization in society: economy, authority and control systems, politics, culture (Szczepański 1989: 26). Due to its inherent development potential, the system of higher education is one of the most important areas where modernization efforts concentrate.

"Imitation" of the West in the Polish modernization and transformation discourse

From the perspective of historical sociology, the system transformation that happened in Poland in 1989 is perceived as a third (after the period of the Second Republic (1918 – 1939) and the communist rule (1945 – 1989) attempt to modernize Poland (Krasnodębski 2006: 193-198). When Poland regained independence in 1918, the most important element of the then development strategy was to defend and reinforce sovereignty. After World War II, communist modernisation took over, trying to reverse the pre-war strategies. The goal of the post-1989 modernization strategy was to make the "return" to Europe possible. Due to the fact that this time it was economy, not politics, that was the priority in the strategy, the political encumbrance was removed from the state actions and dealings. Reform drafts appeared in result of arbitrary efforts of scarce modernization elites aided by Western experts. These efforts were most often justified by economic necessity, reasonable way of development or conditions posed by Western partners. It is crucial to see this type of transformation modernization in the "imitational strategy" perspective, as the strategy assumed that Poland will return to Europe automatically once the universal Western civilization development model is implemented.

Sociological attempts to reconstruct the system transformation (Kolasa-Nowak 2007) often depict the unprecedented character of Poland's leaving the communist regime as a comeback to normality, rather than a revolution. Therefore, in relation to post-communist countries, the term "transition" is used to refer to the shift from communism to free market and democracy. It was meant to be a rapid modernization process with in a clear direction, and a quite specific beginning and end (Kochanowicz 1998: 25) or, to be more accurate, a process towards a certain future, i.e. the future that was personified by the Western world of today (Szacki 1999: 129). With no sources of inspiration and technical solutions for the reconstruction of the economy and society (Chołaj 1998), the idea of the "imitational model of transformation", or "imitational modernisation" was readily adopted and reduced to a simple "catching up with Europe". As some authors wrote on the tenth anniversary of the system transformation (Szacki 1999: 130-132), the "imitational model of transformation" proved to be a result of a wishful thinking approach and demonstrated that a system transformation is a change with an unpredictable outcome and mechanisms that we know little of. And what is important, it is a change that is still to be completed (Sztompka 1999a: 65-66).

More critical and inquisitive probes into the transformation have emphasised not only the continuity of the changes, but also the numerous aspects of modernization processes which are subject to historical and geographical factors. Attention has been drawn to the ambiguous character of the target state that Polish society tries to imitate, as well as the impact of the past states. The imitated state was associated with the three subsequent progress stages of societies of fully-developed capitalism: "early modernity", "late modernity" and "post-modernity". As for the past concepts, "pre-socialism" and "real socialism" stages were distinguished. Late 1990's in Poland witnessed attempts to imitate all three development stages of "modernity" at the same time (Ziółkowski 1999: 42 – 45), but also efforts to make use of the past experience. Particularly that the so called "false modernization" of real socialism widened the gap between Poland and the West, indicating that the country was at a pre-modern rather than modern stage of development (Sztompka 2005: 137-138). As the years went by, especially when Poland joined the European Union, a new reference frame started to gain significance – the global capitalist system. It was noticed that Poland is not an isolated island, never touched by global trends, and development started to be perceived also in relation to the global crisis. Thus social science records a new perception of the Polish transformation experience in three dimensions: a specifically Polish dimension (the initiation and early stages of the changes), regional – post-communist (continuation of the changes) and global (later stages and the current situation). The final and broadest dimension is more and more associated with reference societies that are alternative to the Western model: Japan, the Asian Tigers or China (Sztompka 2005: 139), particularly that modernisation theories currently employ the differentiation between centre and outskirts, or pioneers and imitators in relation to the configuration of The European Union vs. the United States. Political science experts argue that Europe gradually gets into a classical imitation trap, becoming more and more a mere periphery of and getting more and more mentally dependant on the USA. In particular, this can be observed in the European research and development policy (Zarycki 2006).

Polish "return to the future", or modernization of the development strategy

As has been demonstrated, the Poles may pride themselves in having a considerable collection of analyses, interpretations and studies dedicated to the two decades of the system transformation. Unfortunately the same does not apply to the studies on the country's future. The fascination with the past developed at the expense of the thinking about the future, and Polish governments drifted towards it rather without a clear goal in mind (Karpiński 2009:

59). Although it has to be admitted that in communist times, on an initiative of the Polish Academy of Science, the Committee of Research and Prognosis "Poland 2000" was set up. The Committee, whose activities led to regular studies on the country's future, operates until today (under the name of "Poland 2000 Plus") and carries out prognostic research. Studies on the current deficiency in thinking about Poland's future emphasise the resentment that Poles have towards the glorious visions of the socialist system that all failed. Therefore all governments after 1989 focused on short-term and current economic and political problems, and – irrespective of their political orientation – ignored prognostic studies that reached further into the future (Karpiński 2009: 57).

However, thinking about the future is perhaps the most important criterion of making decisions "here and now." Unfortunately, contemporary Polish sociology, enchanted by the magic of the past, rarely endeavours to tackle analyses associated with future prognosis and shaping the development policy for the country, lagging behind economists and political science experts. Their importance is acknowledged, inter alia, by the initiators of the Polish Forum of Strategic Thinking², who do not dodge questions like "*Polonia, quo vadis?*" and dedicated one of their seminars to strategic problems of the development of higher education in Poland. Few sociologists comment on the current "Polish-style modernization" (Krasnodębski 2006) or "Polish modernization" (Morawski 2010). The need to "modernize the Polish modernization strategy" is, however, recognized. The strategy should be freed from the dogmas enrooted both in old historical complexes and post-communist mentality, and adapted to the actual Polish needs and interest (Krasnodębski 2006: 209).

How has the modernization of the Polish development strategy evolved so far? The answer to this question is provided by the authorities themselves, pointing at a specific evolution of the strategic programming system (Żuber 2007). The first stage (1989 – 1994) was marked by scrapping the centrally planned system, together with modest governmental achievements in the area of programming. The second stage (1994 – 2004) witnessed a gradual resurrection of development programming, accompanied by increased programming efforts of the government. The third stage started when the country accessed the EU: Poland joined the EU programming process, which necessitated not only the most advantageous use of the EU monies, but first of all an active participation in the creation of a vision of the EU

² http://www.pte.pl/353_forum_mysli_strategicznej.html

development. The fact that the development policy was finally recognized in the Polish law³ is valuable, but it happened very late. In the period before the development policy law was adopted (i.e. the years 1989 – 2006), more than 400 strategies and strategic documents (mostly with short- and medium-term assumptions) had been published. They were incoherent and lacked continuity. Legal works were often politically biased, decisions were taken *as hoc*, and there was no a clear-cut long-term vision of the country's development. In consequence, the policy goals were dispersed, actions were duplicated, and divergent ideas were supported.

Only after 20 years of transformation, and 5 years after the EU accession, did the Polish authorities draw conclusions from the lack of a comprehensive model of development matching the news system conditions, and the inefficiency of the pro-development actions pursued by the authorities so far. The changes in the thinking about the future were heralded by the 2007 – 2008 research programme called *National Programme: Foresight Poland 2020*⁴ which led to the development of five long-term scenarios for the country's development, arranged from the most optimistic variant to the most pessimistic one (Baczko 2009; Nowicka 2009). It may be assumed that the breakthrough came in 2009. The report titled *Poland 2030. Development challenges*⁵ appeared that year and was considered a third civilization project (after the transformational and accession projects) The project, thought of as a pioneering achievement, has the status of a Green Paper and thus forms the framework for the Long-Term Development Strategy of the Country. The same year the Polish government officially adopted a coherent vision of the strategic management of the development of the country described in the document titled *Management System for the Development of Poland*⁶ and set up the Coordination Committee for the Development Policy (CC)⁷, the task of which is to organize and coordinate strategic documents.

What triggered such an about-turn? As can be easily noticed, the intensification of works towards a better national social and economic policy coincided with Poland's entering the European Union. The necessity to implement the goals of the Lisbon Strategy, accompanied

³ The Law of 6 December 2006 on development policy principles published as a unified text – following amendments introduced in subsequent years – on 15 May 2009 (Journal of Law, 2006, No. 227, Item 1658).

⁴ <http://www.polska2020.pl/mis/> (15.05.2010)

⁵ <http://www.polska2030.pl/> (15.05.2010)

⁶ http://www.mrr.gov.pl/aktualnosci/ministerstwo/Documents/Zalozenia_SZR_wersja_przyjeta_przez_RM_270409.pdf

⁷ Zarządzenie nr 21 Prezesa Rady Ministrów z 11 marca 2009 r.

with the possibility to use European funds (particularly in the 2007 – 2013 period), proved to be a second chance to push forward the development of the country. Now economists have a reason to warn of such dangers for the development of Poland as the paralysis of the Polish strategic thought or wasting part of the European funds (Kukliński 2008).

Reforming higher education: modernization impulse or imperative?

Development of education has been treated by modernization theorists not only as a simple way to get rid of backwardness in less developed countries (Bendix 1968: 37). Karl Deutsch saw it as a proof of social and political mobilization conditioning the development of modernization processes (Szczepański 1989: 33). The role of higher education in modernization processes was brought up already in communist Poland. The old assumption that higher education constitutes a development factor only to the degree of the will of the social and economic policy of the country to use the potential of schools of higher education (Szczepański 1969: 212) looks very up-to-date. Meanwhile, during the system transformation period, the state authorities content with the dynamic development of university studies in Poland in 1990's, forgot about this dependence.

Higher education in Poland experienced a boom in terms of a sudden increase in the number of students (higher education scholarization index rose fourfold in 1990 – 2009 and reached one of the highest levels in OECD countries) and an accompanying upsurge of schools of higher education (also a fourfold increase). It was not, however, a result of a conscious and planned educational policy of the state, but a combination of social and economic conditions that led to the transformation of the higher education system into an educational services market (Buchner-Jeziorska 2005: 16-17). Critics often underline the elemental and rather chaotic character of the then process taking place in the higher education sector that brought about a number of negative consequences, in particular, deterioration of the quality of education. No strategic thinking on the part of the state authorities is clearly evidenced by the underfunding of the higher education and research sector. It is enough to say that two years after Poland joined the EU, i.e. in 2006, R&D spending in relation to GDP was more than four times lower than the OECD countries average and three times lower than the EU-27 average (*OECD* 2009)⁸. At the same time, despite the fact that the percentage of GDP spent on higher

⁸ In 2006, the R&D expenditures amounted to 0.56% of the Polish GDP, while the OECD average was 1.26%, and that of EU-27 was 1.77.

education in Poland was not much different from that in OECD countries⁹, schools of higher education had to cope with the problem of much slower increase of budget subsidies in relation to the growth of the number of students (Dąbrowa-Szeffler, Jabłecka 2007: 168). In consequence, the spending per one student (taking into account the purchasing power parity) was one of the lowest among OECD countries (*Diagnoza...*2009: 62).

In recent years, public and academic discourse has held a number of opinions about the backwardness or even collapse of higher education in Poland. In most cases, they are illustrated with global university rankings in which even the best Polish universities occupy distant positions (see: Jajszczyk 2008). After Poland entered the EU and accepted the requirement to implement the postulates of the Lisbon Strategy, more and more can be heard about the slim chances of building a modern knowledge-based economy and society in Poland. These opinions are supported with detailed or synthetic indices, such as the Summary Innovation Index (SII) which contains a weighted sum of various indices, including, among others, number of university graduates, budget and company spending on research and innovation etc. The 2007 survey had Poland's SII at 0.24, i.e. noticeably below the EU average (0.45 for EU-27), which placed Poland in the group so the called catching-up countries. As the experts estimated then, Poland would be able to come within reach of average UE-27 SII levels unfortunately only in some 20 years. Therefore, given the number of indices demonstrating "poor modernisation" of the education and science sector, it is hard to say that the decision-makers treat higher education as a key factor determining the level of society's modernization potential (Buchner-Jeziorska 2007).

The implementation of the Bologna Process could, however, be perceived as playing a modernization role in reforming higher education in Poland. Particularly that Poland looks good in reports that include indices assessing quantitative implementation of the process tools (as the *2007 Stocktaking Report* shows, Poland, on average, scored above 4 out of a rating from 1 to 5, i.e. above the European average). Unfortunately, there is no systematic research in Poland that would allow for a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the Bologna Process postulates (Kraśniewski 2009: 72). The *Stocktaking Report* provides data on the advancement of Poland only in relation to the technical and organizational aspects of the Process The Polish success here may be attributed to the "face-lifting treatment" performed on

⁹ In 2006, this index for Poland was 1.0% of GDP, while the average for OECD countries and EU-19 was 1.3% GDP (Education at a Glance 2009: OECD Indicators)

higher education, rather than any real changes in the paradigm (Buchner-Jeziorska 2010). The state did not embark on a systematic and comprehensive management of the modernization of the higher education sector, and actually transferred the responsibility for the process to the schools themselves. The state did not help with legislation either (in the 2005 law on higher education (still in force) there are no references to the Bologna Process) (Kraśniewski 2006: 38). Also, Poland has not worked out any platform for effective cooperation between the main players engaged in the Bologna Process implementation, i.e. the decision-makers and universities (academic circles) (Chmielecka 2007). This is a result of treating the Bologna Process as a political project, perceived more like a necessity to join this pan-European initiative and adapt to its requirements, rather than an impulse to pull together the modernization forces of the country. It demonstrates that the decision-makers fail to understand the idea of the Process and thus the potential Process benefits that Polish higher education could take advantage of are lost.

Studies on activities taken up by the state to enhance the social and economic development of the country demonstrate that during the past 20 years all subsequent governments have failed to work out a policy for higher education (Dziedziczak-Foltyn 2008, 2010). From the formal point of view, the social and economic development plans for Poland do comprise the problem of higher education, including both the needs of universities (areas in need of immediate changes and additional funding are recognized) and the role of higher education schools in the process of the development of the knowledge-based economy (emphasizing the inevitability of cooperation between science and economy). Indeed, schools of higher education were included as a priority in the 2007 – 2013 priority programmes. But the strategic programmes formed as recently as several years ago dealt with higher education only in the context of removing insufficiencies in the education and research systems, without attributing to them any special roles in the country's modernization and development process. The *Education development strategy for 2007 – 2013* treats higher education only marginally, the *Strategy for the development of higher education to 2015* has been scrapped (it has been prepared but never implemented), and the *Strategy for the development of science* has stuck at the level of public consultation.

The Government's determination in thinking about the future of higher education can only be seen in the actions that the authorities undertook during the last two years (2008 – 2010). Undoubtedly, the Polish authorities do not want the black scenarios of the country's

development come true, as it would mean stagnation of the educational and research sectors, or even deterioration of their condition and lowering of the intellectual capital quality (Baczko 2009; Nowicka 2009). Finally, the importance of the modernization potential of higher education has been noticed and visibly accentuated. The *Report on the intellectual capital of Poland* of 2008 identifies 30 challenges: 5 of them refer directly to higher education. The role of the universities and other schools of higher education was also acknowledged in the *Poland 2030. Development challenges* report published a year later. After a long break following the unsuccessful implementation of the higher education strategy project, efforts towards creating a new strategy were intensified, which led to the development of two projects: one originated in academic circles, the other was prepared by governmental experts. Both treat higher education as a driving force of the Polish knowledge-based economy. Adoption of such an approach, however, necessitates redefining the role of the state and its responsibility towards schools of higher education.

At the same time, modernization efforts of the state crystallized as new legal propositions for the higher education sector (until recently, the sector was regulated by two Laws of 1990 and 2005) and took the form of three reform packages under the common banner "Partnership for Knowledge" (a new model of higher education management, a new model of academic career, and a reform of studies and student rights). After working two years on the amendments to the *Law on higher education* and the *Law on academic titles and degrees, and titles and degrees in arts*, the draft of a new Law was published on 30 March 2010. The intensity of efforts taken by the authorities to boost the development of higher education in Poland (or perhaps to recover it from stagnation) prove the country's determination and engagement. But these efforts still face harsh criticism from the representatives of academic circles and other experts who underline the fact that the reforms should be preceded by adopting a strategy for the development of higher education. That is why the state is still criticized for the lack of relevant policies (Dziedziczak-Foltyn 2009). Furthermore, there is no professional, national debate on educational policy, something that OECD experts called for, and no system and logistic background to prepare the reforms (Thieme 2009: 346, 376). In this situation, it seems of particular importance that the Polish government makes use of the principles of political economy already known in Europe (Kwiek 2009), imports expert know-how (Białecki 2008) and develops a stance on national goals in the educational policy preceded by a review of currently existing international solutions in this area (inter alia, Maliszewski 2007; Thieme 2009). For, until today, knowledge in this respect has been scarce, foreign solutions have been

looked at with scepticism and comparisons with other countries have rarely been made (*Diagnoza ...2009*: 18-19).

Conclusions

Poland faces reforms that are going to put Polish higher education on the modernization track for the first time in the two-decade transformation history. The return to the thinking about the future and the embryonic development policy give hope that gone are the times when the decision makers failed to locate higher education among the actual developmental priorities. It is the first time when the Third Republic, in its efforts to modernize the sector of higher education schools, attempts to use its potential in the social and economic development of the country. Initially, due to the summary character of the transformational process, the authorities' efforts have been limited to the creation of legal frameworks for the gradual modelling of the higher education system, alongside economic, social and political reforms in Poland. Catching-up with Europe made Polish universities participate in the Bologna Process implementation, and that is the reason why it was treated little more than a political project. Although the Process served a mobilization purpose, but this mobilization concerned the schools only. Although it was also interpreted in political categories, the necessity to carry out the postulates of the Lisbon Strategy (with the support of EU funds) served a visible mobilization purpose for Poland as a member of the EU: Poland pledged efforts to create knowledge-based society and economy. But as for now, the modernisation potential of higher education and its modernisation needs are acknowledged in declarations, at the level of strategic documents. Although the strenuously developed strategy for the development of higher education constitutes a turning point in the actions pursued by the state, but it still does not prove the existence of a comprehensive and effective policy in this area. An important element of this policy should be to observe "how others do it" and to transfer those concepts, solutions, procedures or debate patterns that could prove useful in carrying out modernization projects on Polish turf. Paradoxically, Poland opting for an imitational strategy to modernize its society some years ago, now, facing changes in the higher education system, seems to be far away from the temptation to "imitate" and enjoy the "latecomer advantages"¹⁰.

¹⁰ The term introduced by T. Veblen in 1915 to describe a civilization leap omitting transitional stages and allowing to reduce progress implementation costs.

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